

KHOVSGOL BIKING TRAILS



‘Start to finish, this was an exceptional experience. We have worked with a lot of travel companies and would highly recommend EL. For people who like to get off the beaten path, you guys are perfect!’

LeeAnne Lavender

This is a customisable trip. It is adaptable, giving you the freedom to build a unique and personal trip for your chosen date. Upgrade your accommodation for all - or just part - of your trip, slow down the pace with few extra nights here and there or add a few more active adventures along the way. All images used throughout this document were taken either by our guests or members of our team. This is the Mongolia that you will also experience.

Quick Overview

The wild landscapes of Khovsgol Province form a dramatic background to this trip where we've chosen the bike routes to give you a real experience of the mountain forest steppe regions of northern Mongolia. Not just the landscapes but the way of life of the people you'll meet en-route as well. The main bike route we've chosen is in an area little visited by western groups so each encounter with local people is potentially an authentic cultural exchange.


Yes, we've included Khovsgol Nuur - considered a highlight in any guidebook. See it as your reward. But, this itinerary is not about 'must see sights'. This is about real everyday Mongolia and its wild and beautiful landscapes including the high peaks of the spectacular Khoridol Saridag Mountains.


This is one of our favourite biking routes in Mongolia. It will be challenging in places including horse trails and river crossings (so we recommend you have experience of mountain biking on a mix of terrain) but the landscapes are worth the effort and you have the flexibility to decide how much you want to explore by bike with the EL tour vehicles providing support meaning you can always change from four wheels to two.

Ulaanbaatar


Day to suit you	Discover Ulaanbaatar Free City Walking Tour	Your own choice of accommodation	Free transfer	Local lunch welcome drink
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Khovsgol Nuur National Park

Day One 	Fly Murun Delger River	Family owned rustic ger camp	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Driving - Up to one hour transfer time to Chinggis Airport Biking - Approx 25km total on dirt road with vehicle support 	L/D
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Day Two - Seven 	Ulaan Uul Bike Circuit Khatgal	Day 2 - 6 - Tent Camp Day 7 - Wooden house within hasha (wooden fence) - With Bambakh & family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Biking - Approx 50km per day by bike on mixed terrain with vehicle support 	B/L/D
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Day Eight	Khatgal Horse Trek	Wooden house within hasha (wooden fence) - With Bambakh & family	-	B/L/D
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Day Nine 	Khovsgol Nuur National Park	Standard tourist ger camp	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Biking - Approx 50km on dirt track with vehicle support 	B/L/D
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Day Ten	Khovsgol Nuur National Park Option for day trek	Standard tourist ger camp	-	B/L/D
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Ulaanbaatar

Day Eleven	Fly Ulaanbaatar	Your own choice of accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Driving - 145km on dirt and asphalt road and up to one hour transfer time from Chinggis Airport 	B/L
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Map Of Route



Online map - [https://www.tripline.net/trip/Khovsgol Bike Trails - Mongolian 11-day tailor made mountain biking experience-25173764357610179588E0A27850EA0F](https://www.tripline.net/trip/Khovsgol%20Bike%20Trails%20-%20Mongolian%2011-day%20tailor%20made%20mountain%20biking%20experience-25173764357610179588E0A27850EA0F)

Nuts And Bolts

Where do you cycle when there are no roads? Vast and wild, the Mongolian steppe is the perfect setting for a rugged, off-road adventure. Experience wilderness and a way of life that's withstood the test of time and the elements. Dirt, grass and gravel roads abound. Where there are no tracks, simply pedal your way across open steppe - the rolling undulating terrain that makes up the majority of the country. We have developed great cycling routes in collaboration with the local communities that we work in long-term local community partnership with.

With our Khovsgol Biking Trails you make your own pace although we suggest that at least a moderate level of physical fitness will be an asset. Distances are detailed in each itinerary but are fluid and depending on the local conditions and how the group members feel. You can choose to cycle the whole distance or you can hop in the van whether that's for only an hour or for the whole day.

While there are no 'technical' mountain biking sections experience confidence in riding dirt trails will be an advantage as all biking days are on dirt, grass or gravel trails - typically vehicle width but with also some horse trails.

Please also take the number of nights camping and style of ger accommodation into consideration. We believe that camping allows you to experience the wonderful remoteness of Mongolia and by using local family ger accommodation, it provides you with a more genuine experience. We use good quality camping equipment but home comforts are not a feature of this trip.

There are more details towards the end of the document.

Day To Day

Day To Suit You

Discover Ulaanbaatar | Free city walking tour



Ulaanbaatar is home to roughly 45% of Mongolia's population and our free city walking tour will give you a more local introduction to this vibrant frontier style city with a strong Mongolian identity of its own.

Yes, the city is chaotic and loud and not as glamorous as other capital cities but it is the beating heart of Mongolia and the hub of contemporary Mongolian urban life. The reality for many Mongolians takes place in this urban context, in a city they are striving to develop and improve. Ulaanbaatar deserves to be appreciated and explored as the urban centre that it is.

Our informal and relaxed city walking tour will give you a contrasting insight into a way of life, compared to that of the rural population. This day is not about museums or shopping – it's about getting out and about and exploring and discovering.

Today you'll spend the day in the company of one of my female Mongolian trip assistants. The day will include Nогоон Нуур (Green Lake) community project - a community space created for the local population of the nearby Bayangol ger districts by Ulzii - a Mongolian philanthropist - as well as other areas of the city including Gandan Monastery.

Logistics

- Accommodation: Of your own choice
 - Meals: Local lunch and welcome drink
 - Travel: Free transfer
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Day One

Fly Murun | Delger Murun River



Fly to Murun - the provincial capital of Khovsgol Aimag - where your EL team will be there to meet you. Explore this lively capital town of Khovsgol Province which bears the hallmarks of being a trading outpost close to the border with Russian Siberia, in that it is slightly wild and rough around the edges. However, this adds to its charm and unique atmosphere – especially the bustling market in the centre of town.

On arrival, transfer to your bikes and travel to just north of Murun to be rewarded with stunning views of the Delger Murun River ('wide river') at the Tultiin Tokhoi ger camp. Together with the Ider River, the Delger Murun it is one of the sources of the mighty Selenge River.

We don't dictate what to do as everyone is different in what they would like to do but why not explore the Ushigiin Uver deer stones complex located close to the spectacular Delger Murun River. Known as Bugan Khoshoo in Mongolian they are believed to possibly be ancient grave markers for warrior chiefs.

Logistics

- **Accommodation:** Twin-share ger at intimate Mongolian owned rustic ger camp. Facilities including hot showers in separate block



This is a small and intimate ger camp - a family run business rather than a corporate ger camp. There's even a wonderful greenhouse. The owner Esmedekh is local to the area and on site most of the time.

The ger camp has possibly one of the best sunset viewing platforms in Mongolia - perfect for enjoying a cold beer. And for those brave enough, you can swim in the river. An alternative is the short (30-40 minute) hike up the nearest hill for spectacular views over the extended river valley.

- **Meals:** Dinner * other meals depending on flight time
 - **Travel:** Up to one hour transfer time to Chinggis Khan Airport
 - **Biking:** Up to 25km biking distance with support vehicle on mix of terrain including local dirt and gravel track jeep trails. With vehicle support.
 - **Flight Departure and Arrival Time TBC.** Weight restriction 15kg (10kg check-in and 5kg hand luggage). Hand luggage 'officially' restricted to 1-piece. Excess baggage charges are between \$4-\$7 per kilo depending on the route. Please note that the domestic airline may change the flight time schedule closer to the day of departure
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Day Two - Seven

Arbulag | Bayanzurkh | Beltas Valley | Khatgal



Six days dedicated to mountain biking through the local landscapes and rural communities of this little visited area. This is the section I call 'big sky trails' and you'll understand more as you explore the mountain forest steppe scenery and river valleys of this stunning region.



The route passes through mountainous areas where roads follow rivers upstream and occasionally cross up and over into the neighbouring watershed. You mostly follow jeep tracks along river valleys and over passes. Trails are mostly hard-packed dirt but these can be muddy / marshy due to rainfall. Be prepared for the crossing of small rivers but this depends on the final route chosen (and also remember you'll have the 4x4 Russian vans). At the end of each day you'll be rewarded with spectacular wild camping sites - the only option available to really experience the wonderful remoteness of Mongolia.



On Day Seven, arrive into the rural community of Khatgal - a small rural community at the southern edge of Khovsgol Nuur although you won't actually see the lake here - just the start of the mouth of the Eg River. In Khatgal we work in long-term local community partnership with the herder Basaanchuluu and his family and you'll receive a very warm welcome.

<https://ridewithgps.com/routes/28867430>

Logistics

- **Accommodation:**
 - **Day 2-6:** Tent camp. UK VANGO tents. We also provide a kitchen tent and a toilet tent (well, a tent to cover the hole in the ground. I call it a 'loo with a view!').
 - **Day 7:** Bambakh's wooden house within his 'hasha' - fenced compound typical to most families. Asian style long drop outside toilet. Hot shower available at the local town shower house - your own private cubicle with plenty of hot water. Queue with the locals and enjoy experiencing a little of their daily way of life
 - **Meals:** B/L/D
 - **Biking:** Flexible biking distance with support vehicle on mix of terrain including local dirt and gravel track jeep trails. Depending on the weather conditions, the track may at times be marshy. With vehicle support.
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Day Eight

Khatgal | Horse Trek



Switch your two wheels for four legs as you spend a relaxing day exploring the interior steppe landscapes in the company of your host Basaanchuluu. You'll meet families that live in the area and get a more genuine introduction into their everyday way of life. However, we leave the plan entirely flexible and in the hands of your host as this leads to a more organic and Mongolian type of exploration. The landscapes you will discover are not mentioned in a guidebook. There are no considered 'highlights'. Instead, this is the area where Bambakh grazes his livestock.

Within Khatgal itself there are hills to walk up within the town for remarkable views. Or why not walk and explore Khatgal's port where the Sukhbaatar III (Mongolia's Navy) is located.

Logistics

- **Accommodation:** Bambakh's wooden house within his 'hasha' - fenced compound typical to most families. Asian style long drop outside toilet. Hot shower available at the local town shower house - your own private cubicle with plenty of hot water. Queue with the locals and enjoy experiencing a little of their daily way of life
 - **Meals:** B/L/D
 - **Travel:** -
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Day Nine & Ten

Khovsgol Nuur National Park



Khovsgol Nuur is known as Dalai Ej - Mother Sea to Mongolians. It is a spiritual place for Mongolians and its natural beauty makes it a stunning location to take a little time out.

Khovsgol is 126km in length and represents roughly 70% of Mongolia's fresh water and is the younger sister to Lake Baikal in Siberia and part of the same Rift System. If the sky is clear, you can stand on the shoreline and see the snowcapped Sayan Mountains - the border with Siberia. It is truly spectacular.

For those wanting to bike, there is only one compacted dirt track connecting Kahtgal to Khovsgol. It can get busy with tourism traffic but there are some great forested parts and the lake provides a spectacular backdrop as do the Khoridol Saridag Mountains. And you also have the Jankhai Pass to contend with.



Stretch the legs?

On your second day, why not explore the Khoridol Saridag Mountains by hiking up the 2300m Cuchee Uul (above). Although an easy trail, it takes approximately 2.5 hours of walking (with approximately 700 metres of vertical climb) to get to the top with its remarkable view. However, even for those not keen on the 700 metres of climb you can still walk part way (still with views) or just enjoy walking along the lake shore with its lagoons.

Logistics

- **Accommodation:** Ger at the Gurvan Erdene Ger Camp. Western style toilet and hot shower in separate block although the **showers are limited to certain times of day**



We use Gurvan Erdene because it is the northernmost camp on the western shore - away from the main developed area. It has views out over the Koridol Saridag Mountains and has a lovely atmosphere. It is owned by a local Khatgal family who are trying to manage the 'footprint' of the camp with eco toilets and solar showers. We prefer only to use Mongolian owned ger camps as our payment remains in the local community. It also means you often get to mix with Mongolian holiday makers who help to give you a different perspective on modern life in Mongolia.

- **Meals:** B/L/D
 - **Biking:** Day Nine - Roughly 45km on hard packed dirt road including crossing dry river beds. With vehicle support
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Day Eleven

Ulaanbaatar



Fly back to UB where we'll transfer you to your accommodation and the rest of the day will be yours to create your own experience. Remember you could use our UB guide to help you to explore the urban side of Mongolian life in downtown Ulaanbaatar. Alternatively, one of our trip assistants could be made available but please let me know in advance.

Logistics

- **Accommodation:** Of your own choice
 - **Meals:** B * other meals depending on flight time
 - **Travel:** Roughly 145km on dirt and asphalt road (approx 3 hours driving time not including stops). Averages of between 30 and 65 km/hr are usual but depend on road and weather conditions. Up to one hour transfer time from Chinggis Khan airport.
 - **Flight Departure and Arrival Time TBC.** Weight restriction 15kg (10kg check-in and 5kg hand luggage). Hand luggage 'officially' restricted to 1-piece. Excess baggage charges are between \$4-\$7 per kilo depending on the route. Please note that the domestic airline may change the flight time schedule closer to the day of departure
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Logistics



Support

The trip is fully supported with an EL Mongolian team of (female) trip assistant and (male) driver. Our Russian Furgon 4x4 vans provide backup - transferring luggage and all equipment and maybe at times those who need four wheels not two!

Safety

Wearing a helmet is compulsory. If you take an EL bike then you'll have free use of a helmet. Your trip assistant is trained in first aid and there's a medical kit in each van. But, to a large degree you must be responsible for your own safety while riding. Your EL team will also carry walkie talkies.

Pace and Experience

You make your own pace. Distances are detailed in the itinerary but are kept flexible. While there are no 'technical' mountain biking sections experience in riding dirt trails will be an advantage (see below). Also, there will be climbs - some quite vigorous.

Terrain

There's no biking on asphalt / main roads - it's all classed as off road. While the trails are generally smooth (ish - expect hard-packed dirt roads), some passes have loose gravel and sandy patches with some rocky descents. The weather will also impact on the terrain. At times there will be a strong headwind which can make for slow progress. Depending on your route, there may be river crossings (but remember you have the vans if you don't want the challenge).

Bikes

The bikes are Giant XTC 800 with lightweight alloy frames, Shimano components and front suspension. If you bring your own bike, please make sure it is a mountain bike, preferably with front suspension, and that it is in good mechanical order. Each van has Thule bike racks (17kg maximum weight).

Repair

All bikes are serviced prior to the trip. Basic spares and tools are carried in the support vehicle, though we cannot guarantee having spares for every conceivable problem. If you're bringing your own bike then also bring a basic tool kit, a spare tube and an air pump suitable for the bike.

Accommodation

A variety of accommodation - see the itinerary for details

Pricing And Group Size

Group Size - Flexible with discounts available for children. Price below is with a maximum of 3 people per vehicle - can be adapted.

The prices below include use of a GIANT XTC 800. If you prefer to bring your own bike, please ask for the prices.

- 2-4 Guests US\$ 2630 pp + domestic flight of approx 650,000 MNT
- 5 Guests US\$ 2580 pp + domestic flight of approx 650,000 MNT
- 6 Guests US\$ 2270 pp + domestic flight of approx 650,000 MNT

Maybe you want to bike but your travel partner doesn't? No problem. Both come along. Your travel partner will receive a 'no biking' discount.

- 2 Guests US\$ 2545 pp + domestic flight of approx 650,000 MNT
- 3-4 Guests US\$ 2325 pp + domestic flight of approx 650,000 MNT
- 5 Guests US\$ 2270 pp + domestic flight of approx 650,000 MNT
- 6 Guests US\$ 2040 pp + domestic flight of approx 650,000 MNT

Where Does Your Payment Go?

- In our experience, how people choose who to book with usually comes down to the cost. Budget is a very personal thing and everyone is different in what they want to pay.
- We're a registered Mongolian business and registered social entrepreneurship. We are not a luxury tour operator. We're a small business that receives around 100-150 bookings per year. We can't compete on price with our budget competition that don't pay sustainable wages, or with the international companies that use agencies to run their trips and receive 1000s of bookings per year. We also can't compete with unregulated individual guides or drivers that offer cut-price trips.
- To help you see where your payment goes, we're very much driven by our philosophy of making a positive difference in Mongolia through tourism. Your payment remains in Mongolia and goes back into the communities through which you travel. We are also a member of Tourism Declares A Climate Emergency - a collective of travel organisations who have declared a climate emergency and are coming together to find solutions. We accept our responsibility to tell the truth, work together, and help build a new, regenerative tourism.
- We focus on community-based tourism - working directly with local people and communities - slowly building up relationships and what we call long-term local community partnerships with them. We work side by side with each family and look at ways we can support them.
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- We also run our free long-term training school for Mongolian women that want to work in tourism but don't have the skills or knowledge to do so. We provide free training and then create long-term employment opportunities for them.

Carbon Offsets

- Although carbon offsets are far from imperfect and not the whole answer, they make a difference. Emissions per kilometre for domestic flights are always much higher because such a large proportion of the flight is spent taking off and landing. With this in mind, as a company we will be calculating the offset for all domestic flights used by our guests and paying the offset to buy Plan Vivo Foundation carbon certificates which are used to support the Plan Vivo Mongolian Nomad Project - working in partnership with the Mongolian Society of Range Management. Check our website for more details.



I provide detailed Pre Departure Guidelines but this is your 'quick (ish) glance' introduction to the EL travel style.

Why this section? I'm not greedy. EL is not a general travel agency and we don't want to be all things to all people. We are an independent micro business driven by the philosophy to support local so that our style of trip is beneficial to all. We use no outside agencies.

We are not perfect. We are just ordinary people trying our best to do something we love. We are not an ever-expanding group of travel professionals. We make mistakes. But we genuinely know and love Mongolia and are willing and eager to learn, develop and strengthen based on feedback from our guests and from all we work with. If it helps, we get repeat custom.

Travelling In Mongolia

Mongolia is the second largest landlocked country in the world. The infrastructure is basic. Mongolian people are tough and resilient and make their way of life in both the city and countryside look easier than it is. Mongolia will challenge you and at times irritate you but it's worth the effort. We're on hand to iron out any niggles and make the experience as smooth as possible but please remember that most of these hiccups are part of life in Mongolia and therefore travelling in Mongolia. We expect you to bring your flexibility and sense of adventure with you.

Travel Times

The travel times are listed under the breakdown of the daily itinerary (under the subheading logistics). Please make sure you are aware of these travel times but remember that an integral part of Mongolian culture is not to ask about the length (time) of any road journey. Mongolia can be a challenging destination, road conditions can change dramatically with the weather and some drives may become longer as a result. But, don't be put off by the road journeys. They're part of Mongolian life. Accept them as part of the experience - Mongolia really is about the journey as much as the destination.

Your Tour Vehicle - The Russian UAZ \ Furgon Van

- Our Furgons are driver owned but we support the drivers with maintenance fees.
- Each Furgon has a high wheel-base, ample luggage space, a sociable layout with forward and backward facing seats, surround side windows and most importantly, impressive off-road capability.
- As is typical with all Furgons, due to the design of the vehicle, seat-belts are not available (2019 although we're working on it for 2020. Get in touch for details if you're concerned) but our Furgons are fitted with grab handles in the passenger area.
- Each EL vehicle has its own simple mobile kitchen, its own sunshade, a small library as well as a 220v inverter/charger. We only put a maximum of three to four EL guests per vehicle.

Your EL Team

Female Mongolian trip assistant

- As a female, it is important to me to use my skills and influence to improve the prospects for other women.
- We don't source the 'best' guides that work the tourism circuit and that already have guaranteed work with other companies. Instead, we provide free long-term training, development and employment opportunities to Mongolian women that want the opportunity to work in tourism (whether that be for a professional reason, for development of personal skills or for economic empowerment) but that other companies won't take as they don't fit the stereotype. Our female Mongolian trip assistants are dynamic women who are searching for an opportunity to train and develop and we provide that long-term opportunity.
- You'll travel with someone who sincerely loves their home country, loves their job and genuinely care about you as our guests. They also have a respectful connection with each of the families we work with and this leads to a more genuine insight for you.
- For us, this is a long-term investment and we invite you to part of this bigger travel philosophy. We're proud to be able to provide a starting block to women in Mongolia.

Male Mongolian Driver

- We employ ten drivers. We know each one and their family personally.
- They are not modern city men - they are more traditional men - often now overlooked by other tour companies who prefer younger more international Mongolians who speak English. We wanted to provide equal opportunities and so as our trip assistants are female and typically younger with a more modern outlook, so our drivers are all male, older and from more traditional backgrounds. We find it is a partnership that works well.
- Yes, their English is limited but their role is to handle the Mongolian roads and not to converse fluently in a multitude of languages.
- Our 'boys' have superb driving skills, are expert mechanics and are supremely talented at the skill of 'mongolclok' - improvising the Mongolian way. It's a joy to watch so if your vehicle does break down, don't get angry. Instead, watch the drivers do what they do best - improvisation.
- They are of the strong and silent type but take the time to know them and you'll see why we employ them and why they are an essential part of our EL family and great, all-round men.

Our Local Long Term Community Partnerships

- We work with a network of local families throughout the country. These are long-term local partnerships we have built up over the 13 years+ we have been based here. These are also our own personal friendships.
- BUT ... We never ask a family to change their daily living for us. We do not try to change Mongolians or their way of life for our/your own benefit or comfort. We don't ask them to change their daily schedule or to put on an 'act' as this would lead to a contrived experience.
- BUT ... Guidebooks portray Mongolians as being warm and welcoming. They are. But they can also be stubborn, taciturn, reserved and very very indifferent. Yes, they can be welcoming but they really do not like displays of impatience, superiority, arrogance or anger and will make it known when they are not happy. They also rarely wear a watch let alone work to an agenda.
- BUT ... As in our everyday lives, sometimes plans change and a family has to go to UB (for a medical reason etc). You will almost certainly comment that you will wish you had more interaction with local families but their livestock and their family life must come first. Reverse the situation for a moment and think about the impact on your life if visitors wanted to document everything about you.
- BUT ... Nothing is planned in any program, because we do not disturb the rhythm of life of the working families visited. We are just trying to share / experience a portion of their life.
- **Yes, there will be tasks in which you can participate. But, you need to be proactive. Offer your time and help.**

Logistics - Meals

- Mongolia one of the most remote countries in the world with a population of 70 million+ livestock. The food Mongolians eat reflect this.
- However, each of our vehicles has a simple portable kitchen as it offers you more freedom and flexibility as we're not reliant on anyone else to provide meals. It also means we can have picnic lunches en-route so as we prepare them you can be exploring the local landscapes or sitting and taking in the view.
- But, it's not the same as a modern well-equipped kitchen. Also, your trip assistants prepare your meals and we're not professional chefs. Also, we take food miles into consideration and prefer to purchase produce local to Mongolia so we do not provide kale smoothies or Thai curries or paella or Chinese stir fry. We just provide honest, heartening grub.
- We buy as much fresh produce as possible but fresh fruit is not available daily. Please remember where you are and that there will be limitations as to what we can provide. If you're the type of person that must have five pieces of fruit a day then you may struggle.
- We often include the families we work with in our meals and so cook to please all including the EL team. However, we do adapt to those with dietary requirements. We frequently cater for vegetarians, those who are following dairy or gluten free diets and even vegans but as mentioned, there will be limitations in place.

Logistics - Weather

Mongolia's weather system has a reputation for a reason. And yes, it may well rain. See it as a blessing. Mongolian herders celebrate rain as without it fresh pasture cannot grow and they lose their livelihoods. We'll prepare you for what weather to expect during your trip (including links to the long-range weather forecast for the regions you will be visiting) and also provide a detailed packing list on booking.

Accommodation - Family Operated Ger Accommodation & Homestays

- As much as possible we use rural family operated ger accommodation. We prefer to support this local form of accommodation as it helps provide a supplementary income and extra financial security for them meaning they are one step further away from having to consider urban migration.
- These are all families we work in long-term local community partnership with - we NEVER turn up unannounced and we never just turn up to a herding family demanding accommodation.
- The circumstances and type of ger accommodation provided will change from family to family. Consider them as small rural businesses NOT rustic luxury homestays. Some accommodation is offered by herders (maybe one separate ger), some is offered by 'retired' herders who no longer migrate (two to four separate gers), some by families that live in small town communities and some by families that own small ger camp businesses (mini ger camps of between 7 to 10 gers). On a couple of itineraries it may also involve sleeping on the floor of the family ger on a mat (such as in western Mongolia).
- Be prepared for a variety of standards. Please remember that this is someone's way of life and home and that they provide what they can in relation to their circumstances.
- Beds will vary in comfort - most rural family members still traditionally sleep on the floor so don't really understand the concept of double memory foam mattresses! See below for more details on toilets and showers.
- You should have your own private ger either to share as an EL group (small group trip) or on your own (tailor made trip) but we don't offer exclusivity as this limits the income of the families so do expect other westerners during peak times. We try to get the right balance but during peak season please accept that you might see other westerners

Accommodation - Toilets & Showers (Family & Homestay)

- **A majority of Mongolia's population do not have access to running water.**
- Toilets - Some will be better than expected. Some will be worse than expected. Most will be outside long (or short) drop Asian style and if it is at a family home then the toilet will be shared by you and the family. The toilets are not there to disgust you - this is the reality of life on the ground.
- Showers - Most Mongolians visit the local town shower house. So this is what you do as well. It gives you an introduction to real daily life for a majority of Mongolians in both urban and rural areas as well as a hot shower. You get your own private cubicle with plenty of hot water. Queue with the locals and enjoy experiencing a little of their daily way of life

Accommodation - Tourist Ger Camps

- If requested and in some locations (such as Khovsgol), we do offer accommodation at ger camps. We don't book the most luxurious or the most exclusive. Instead, we choose the ones that we think work best for you and your style of trip as well as the locations you are visiting.
- There **WILL** be times during your journey when the availability of certain amenities at these ger camps may be lacking. The reasons for this can be varied - low season; high season; electricity/generator problems; remote locations; the simple fact that some amenities are only catered for between certain times of the day. Examples of this could be a ger camp having a lack of hot water, or only having hot water at certain times.
- Lighting in the evening at some places may be by candle-light, and electricity may not be available.
- **Also be prepared for noise - especially if it is in the busy summer season. Not just from the large tour groups that use the ger camps but also from staff members that often congregate in the evenings, the noise of generators when used and also from the parking area ... where drivers head to carry out mechanics and to meet other driver friends they haven't seen in a while. Not all ger camps will be the peaceful idyll you may expect.**

Accommodation - Tent Camps

- Not all itineraries include tent camping. Please check your itinerary.
- We use VANGO Hurricane or Nemesis tents. There is also always a kitchen tent and also a toilet tent. However, this is not the same as a 5* safari in Africa!
- When camping, we do not camp too close to family gers as this intrudes on their privacy. However, local life is only a short walk away. If you like landscapes then you will love our campsites.

Accommodation - Local Hotels

- We don't use hotels in all itineraries.
- Where we do use a hotel, it is locally owned - built for the passing Mongolian trade rather than for western visitors so they have been built with the local population in mind so they are not corporate chains. However, one or two will pleasantly surprise you.
- Why do we do this? It brings money and support into the local communities. As well as staying at the hotel we eat in local restaurants and buy our tour produce from the local market so you get a more real insight into the way of life for the locality.

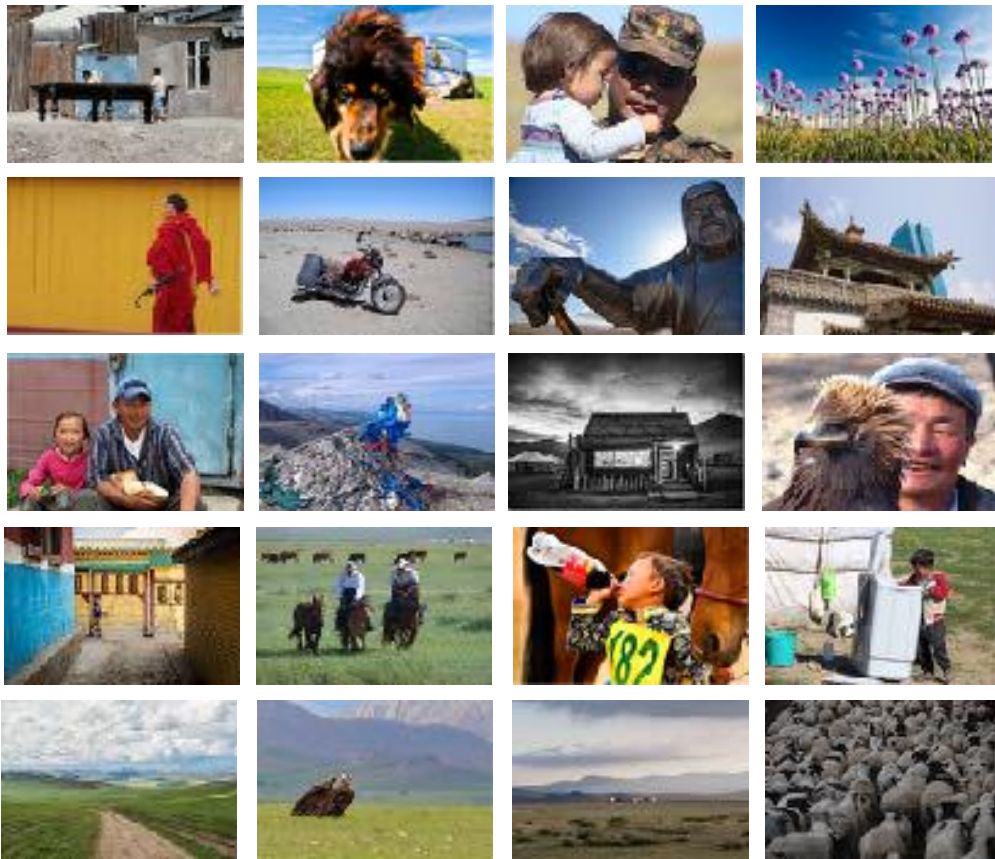
21st Century Mongolia



Mongolia is frequently depicted as a pristine untouched wilderness little changed since the time of Chinggis Khan. But this is not 21st Century Mongolia - this is stereotype or clichéd Mongolia. The traditional culture still remains but there is a drive for modernity and progress.

Our trips focus on 21st Century Mongolia - we try to provide a 'realistic' overview rather than that portrayed by guidebooks and other tour companies. To just want to experience the life of the traditional nomadic way of life is to ignore a majority of the population. We're proud of the long-term local community partnerships we have formed with all spectrums of Mongolian society - from a philanthropist in Ulaanbaatar, to female Kazakh eagle huntresses and also the Tsaatan community. However, Mongolians live in the cities of Darkhan and Erdenet. They also live in the other provincial centres as well as the smaller town and rural communities. There are teachers and Christians and those with disabilities and policemen and musicians and military personnel and accountants and miners and geologists and drivers and shop owners and construction workers and street cleaners - they are all Mongolians.

Don't come in search of what you term the authentic Mongolia. Discard the perceptions that perpetuate the stereotypes of Mongolia and aim for a more true encounter of real life. We ask you to ditch your preconceptions based on what you've read and watched. Instead come with an open mind and be challenged, surprised and often delighted.



There's a hunger for knowledge, understanding, and excellence that drives Mongolian society, and things are changing quickly, but remember that a lot of major changes have happened within just a couple generations. Be patient with Mongolia. While it works through the changes that are going to make it better place, savour the gifts it offers and try to spend less time worrying about small issues that aren't being met - such as hot showers or lack of western toilets. Remember, Mongolians are living this life everyday through all seasons not just for a few weeks.

Mongolians are tough people and make living in their country look easy. But, Mongolia is not an easy option - tourism is still in its infancy so there is only a rudimentary tourist infrastructure in place. It's actually quite refreshing but will be challenging for you.

As Jack Weatherford writes in *Genghis Khan and the Making of the Modern World* - 'Compared to the difficulty of daily life for the herders, living permanently in those areas, ours were only the smallest of irritations.'

Any questions, queries or concerns? Just send them across to me at jess@eternal-landscapes.co.uk. I am always happy to be of help!

Jess